



Health Matters

July 2011



Health Care Safety Net Strengthened in FY 2012 State Budget

Governor Chris Christie's \$29.7 billion budget for State Fiscal Year 2012 demonstrates his commitment to New Jersey's health care system. Despite fiscal challenges, the budget prioritizes hospitals—and recognizes their role as part of the state's health care safety net— by increasing funding by \$30 million for charity care and Graduate Medical Education. The budget also provides full funding for health care for the uninsured through Federally Qualified Health Centers.

Seniors are also protected with full funding for PAAD and Senior Gold, the state's pharmaceutical assistance programs. These programs will not see an increase in co-pays or changes in eligibility this fiscal year. New Jersey's PAAD program is one of the nation's most generous senior pharmaceutical assistance programs.

The Department's commitment to transition seniors from nursing homes back into the community is also supported in this budget through an increase of \$47.6 million for a total of \$157.1 million for our Global Options program. The total budget for the Department of Health and Senior Services in state fiscal year 2012 is nearly \$1.3 billion. For more budget details, please visit:

<http://nj.gov/governor/>

Mary E. O'Dowd Sworn in as Commissioner DHSS

Mary E. O'Dowd, 33, was sworn in by Governor Chris Christie as Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services last month.

"I am confident Mary will use her health policy and hospital finance expertise to strengthen the state's health care delivery system and enhance access to health services for our residents," Governor Christie said at the ceremony.

At her confirmation hearing, O'Dowd said her priorities at the Department will be promoting healthy people and communities, improving end-of-life care by giving patients and their families more say, and enhancing the internal operations of the health department.



Governor Chris Christie reads oath of office to NJDHSS Commissioner Mary O'Dowd and her husband Kevin O'Dowd during the Swearing-In Ceremony on June 3, 2011.

A Message From Health and Senior Services

Commissioner Mary E. O'Dowd

The Department of Health and Senior Services has a strong commitment and proven track record of working collaboratively with our stakeholder groups. Regular communication with our partners is a core strength of our agency. We work in close collaboration with hundreds of community partners representing public health, seniors, health care, emergency responders and minority and multicultural health populations. In recognition of the contributions of our partners, the Department is adding a new component to our monthly newsletter - guest columns from stakeholders. Each month, we will include features from the community highlighting best practices, initiatives and other news from around the state. We invite you to submit features of up to 450 words. If you have news that you want to share with our 1,000 newsletter readers, please submit it to Daniel.Emmer@doh.state.nj.us.



Healthy People/Healthy Communities

12th Cardiac Surgery Report: Fewer Deaths and Infections

Fewer cardiac surgery patients developed infections in 2008 and fewer patients died after surgery, resulting in a 68 percent decline in the death rate since the early 1990s, the state's latest cardiac surgery report shows.

The state's cardiac surgery death rate has dropped to 1.47 percent, compared with 2 percent the previous year and 4.14 percent in 1994-1995, the first years of state data for coronary artery bypass graft (CABG) surgery patient mortality.

The new report shows hospitals have reduced infection rates in cardiac surgery patients by more than 26 percent between 2007 and 2008. This is important because death rates are nearly 10 times higher in patients with infections than in those with none.

The report also examines death rates within 30 days of surgery, infection rates and hospital length-of-stay for New Jersey's 18 cardiac surgery hospitals.

The Department risk-adjusts all hospital and surgeon rates to, in effect, give "extra credit" to those treating sicker patients. In 2008, no hospital or individual surgeon had a risk-adjusted mortality rate that was significantly better or worse than the statewide rate.

To view the DHSS Cardiac Surgery Report Card, please visit www.state.nj.us/health/healthcarequality/documents/cardconsumer08.pdf

New Wellness Benefit for Medicare Beneficiaries

By Jim Sigurdson, Executive Director, Community Services Inc. of Ocean County

For seniors and individuals with disabilities enrolled in Medicare, I have some very good news for you: The doctor will see you now – *for free!*

Individuals with Medicare Part B can now see their doctor once a year for a free wellness exam. This visit includes:

- a review of medical and family history;
- a list of current providers and prescriptions;
- height, weight, blood pressure, and other routine measurements;
- a screening schedule for appropriate preventive services; and
- a list of risk factors and treatment options



On May 25, Commissioner O'Dowd met with seniors in Manchester to speak with them about new benefits of Medicare Part B, including a new free wellness visit.

My agency, Community Services Inc. of Ocean County, is one of 10 governmental or non-profit organizations across the state awarded federal grant funds by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services to make sure Medicare beneficiaries find out about these services.

The 19 free and reduced-cost preventive services covered by Medicare Part B include a one-time "Welcome to Medicare" physical exam, the annual wellness visit, abdominal aortic aneurysm screening, cardiovascular blood tests, diabetes screening tests, glaucoma screening, bone mass measurement, screening mammography, screening pap test and pelvic exam, colorectal cancer screening, prostate cancer screening tests, HIV screening, diabetes monitoring and education, medical nutritional therapy, smoking cessation services, flu and H1N1 flu vaccination, pneumococcal pneumonia vaccination, and Hepatitis B shots for those at risk.

Beneficiaries can get more information on the new, free annual wellness visit and other preventive services covered by Medicare Part B, and take a wellness pledge posted on-line at www.wellnesspledge.nj.gov.

Hospital Happenings

Screening will Protect our Newborns

By: Leslie D. Hirsch, President and Chief Executive Officer, Saint Clare's Health System

On June 2, Saint Clare's Health System hosted Governor Chris Christie as he signed into law groundbreaking legislation that will require testing to screen newborns for congenital heart defects. The bill requires all birthing facilities to perform a pulse oximetry screening, which determines the amount of oxygen in the blood, before a newborn is discharged. The legislation makes New Jersey the first state to mandate pulse oximetry testing on newborns statewide. Through this simple and non-invasive screening, doctors and nurses will be able to detect potential problems for newborns earlier, which will allow for timely intervention.

I am proud to say that we had already been performing pulse oximetry testing on newborns at our *Katena Center for Mother and Child* at Saint Clare's Hospital in Denville, which has more than 1,500 births annually.

We are confident that this additional screening measure will help with the health and well-being of our smallest patients, especially since congenital heart defects are the most common birth defect in newborns. At Saint Clare's, we will consider our efforts a success if we have early detection of just one congenital heart defect.

After signing the law into effect, the governor toured our maternity floor, and met with the Luciano family, who welcomed their daughter Isabella the previous day. As you witness the joy, pride and happiness of a family as they welcome their newborn, you want these parents to have access to the preventative health screenings that will benefit their child.

As members of a health care organization, it is our responsibility to offer extraordinary care for our patients. Through the compassionate care of our physicians and nursing staff, and our collaborative partnership with the state, we will continue *Turning Promise Into Practice* for each of our patients.

On behalf of Saint Clare's Health System, we thank Governor Christie for including Saint Clare's in this important bills signing that will make a significant difference in the lives of newborns in New Jersey.



Governor Chris Christie signs legislation to monitor newborns for congenital heart defects with St. Clare's Health System CEO Leslie Hirsch in Denville, N.J. on Thursday, June 2, 2011.

Mobile Acute Care Hospital to Save Lives in Emergency

The DHSS Division of Public Health Infrastructure, Laboratories and Emergency Preparedness (PHILEP) has partnered with Hackensack University Medical Center (HUMC) on an initiative that will help triage and treat patients on site during a mass casualty event.

The Mobile Acute Care Hospital (MACH), a term used by HUMC, is a collaboration among DHSS, HUMC, the New Jersey Urban Area Security Initiative, which includes the Northeastern region of the state, and the New Jersey Emergency Medical Services Task Force.

Currently, there are two MACH units, which are 43-foot tractor-trailers with expandable sides. Each unit has 7 critical care beds with many advanced capabilities that are usually found in hospital emergency departments.

Both trailers feature digital x-ray machines, diagnostic technology, a field laboratory, oxygen generators, pharmaceutical supplies, lighting for medical procedures and telemedicine capabilities. Each mobile hospital can be operational within one hour of arriving at an incident. DHSS is working with the New Jersey Medical Reserve Corps and hospitals to develop a cadre of personnel to staff the MACH during deployment and activation.

Keep Your Pets Cool and Safe This Summer

The DHSS Office of Animal Welfare reminds everyone to take simple steps to keep pets cool and safe, including not leaving them in parked cars where they can quickly die of heat stroke.



Colin Campbell, Deputy State Public Health Veterinarian (Podium), Raymond P. Martinez, Chairman and Chief Administrator, Motor Vehicle Commission (holding dog) and members of the NJ Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NJSPCA) police remind motorists not to leave pets in parked cars.

Dogs, cats and other pets are more susceptible to heat stroke than people because they have fur coats and cannot sweat. The only way they can cool themselves is to pant or drink water. Pet owners should closely monitor their pets during hot weather for signs of heat stroke: excessive panting, dark red or purple gums and tongue, vomiting, and weakness. Pets suffering from heat stroke require immediate veterinary care.

For more information, watch Dr. Colin Campbell, Deputy State Public Health Veterinarian on [Fox News 29](#). Visit the DHSS [Office of Animal Welfare](#).

Nurse's Notes

Health Care Spotlight: Advanced Practice Nurses

By Carolyn Torre, Director of Regulatory Affairs, New Jersey State Nurses Association

New Jersey's 4,600 licensed Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs) provide a wide range of primary and specialty health care services for patients of all ages in our state.

APNs are registered nurses who hold a minimum of a master's degree and national certification in an APN specialty. APNs in New Jersey include nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists and nurse anesthetists.

They take histories and perform physical exams, diagnose and manage acute and chronic illnesses; order diagnostic and laboratory tests, perform clinical procedures, order and prescribe treatments including drugs and devices, and administer anesthesia. They are skilled educators and counselors teaching patients.

They work with your children's pediatrician, your partner's cardiologist, care for your son or daughter at college, complete well women's care alongside a gynecologist, provide leadership, education and care in many hospitals, offer psychiatric care/counseling in their own independent practices, care for seniors in assisted living residence and provide care at the neighborhood Walmart. APNs work for correctional institutions, state psychiatric hospitals, facilities for the developmentally disabled, county mental health clinics and adult and pediatric respite care programs. One APN is a policy advisor in the Division of Mental Health at DHS; another is the president of the New Jersey Board of Nursing.

Health Care Studies of Interest...

2011 Hospital Survey on Patient Safety Culture

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

Indications Contributing to the Increasing Cesarean Delivery Rate

Obstetrics & Gynecology: July 2011 - Volume 118 - Issue 1 - pp 29-38

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